

LESMD.org Website Questions

1. I hope all is well in this trying time. I recently saw that you had a RFP for a new website. I read the description and it mentioned that you wanted a WORDPRESS site. I represent Granicus in their website department. We have our own proprietary CMS. Would this be an option? I have attached some information on our CMS, as well as some sites that we have done.

<https://www.kcmo.gov/>- Kansas City, MO

<https://www.greenbeltmd.gov/>- Greenbelt, MD

<https://www.dconc.gov/>- Durham County, NC

- This project will be built using WordPress, which is an industry standard Open Source platform and hosted on SiteGround where TCC has an established account. Please refer to section 8 of the RFP document for the preferred Content Management System.
2. I am registered on the EMMA site and have downloaded the RFP and Design Mockups for the LESMD.org web site RFP. However, there are financial and price spreadsheets that I am unable to download. The zip file, when downloaded and opened, merely displays hieroglyphics in my web browser.
 - We did not post any financial or price spreadsheets on the eMMA website, so you will not be able to download those. On the eMMA website, there is no zip file, only a PDF of the 2D mockup. There is a zip file on our website, which opens to several JPG files. Please see the 2D mockup on the eMMA website if you cannot access the zip file through our website.
 3. Is there an allocated budget for this project and what is the amount?
 - There is no allocated budget.
 4. List of Items, Schedule of Requirements, Scope of Work, Terms of Reference, Bill of Materials required.
 - Any information of this nature can be found on our website or on the eMaryland Marketplace website.
 5. Soft Copy of the Tender Document through email.
 - Any information of this nature can be found on our website or on the eMaryland Marketplace website.
 6. Names of countries that will be eligible to participate in this tender.
 - This RFP is open to all bidders. Bidders must be able available during operating hours from 8:00am-4:30pm EST.

7. Information about the Tendering Procedure and Guidelines
 - Any information of this nature can be found on our website or on the eMaryland Marketplace website.
8. Estimated Budget for this Purchase.
 - There is no budget estimate for this purchase.
9. Any Extension of Bidding Deadline?
 - Any information of this nature can be found on our website or on the eMaryland Marketplace website.
10. Any Addendum or Pre Bid meeting Minutes?
 - Any information of this nature can be found on our website or on the eMaryland Marketplace website.
11. Is your organization open to bids from vendors located outside of the US?
 - Yes, the vendor may be located outside of the US. The vendor must be available during operating hours from 8:00am-4:30pm EST.
12. If we get the contract, how many people will we work with from their end and what will the approval process look like?
 - The selected vendor will work with a group of 3-5 TCC team members. All decisions will be discussed by the group, and communicated to the selected vendor.
13. In regards to hosting on page six: You mention having an account with SiteGround and would like to continue to utilize that provider. In order to achieve the goals requested for site speed and functionality, we would like details on the platform and package that you have or plan on having for the new site. Can you provide that information? In addition, would you consider another hosting provider?
 - Yes, we have an established account with SiteGround and we plan continue to utilize that provider. Details pertaining to our specific platform and package will be provided to the selected vendor. In the event that SiteGround is not sufficient for the type of site we need, we will be open to other hosting options.
14. Personalized user experience on page four: The new site will be a platform that is user-centric and intuitive with engaging interactive features. Provide a “personalized” user experience based on frequented links and preferred areas of interest. There are various ways to interpret this statement and levels of user interactions. Can you please provide more details or samples so that we can provide the best experience for the site user.
 - This is what we are going for. Because our website will cover a region of three counties (Wicomico, Worcester and Somerset) our goal is to help our users get to what they are most interested in. For example, if I have used the site before and I (as the user) have frequented links and information pertaining to Somerset County. When I revisit the site, much of the initial information I see should reflect what I am most interested in.

We would like this site to be able to anticipate what the user may be interested in based on their site history.

15. Map requests on page seven: Request is for a custom map feature with animated/custom pins and interactivity. Please provide more information on expectations of interactivity if possible.
 - The maps page will feature an interactive map highlighting the categories below. The user will have the ability to select their preferred county (Somerset, Wicomico, or Worcester), then further select their point of interest. Once selected additional information will "pop-up" including a photo (if applicable), the website, a few sentences about the selected item, and a link for more information.

16. Please select the budget range that fits within your realm of reasonable investment for this project. The reason that we ask, is that we want to make sure to craft a proposal and solution that fits comfortably with your expectations. a.\$50,000 - 100,000 b.\$100,000 - \$150,000 c.\$150,000 - \$200,000 d.\$200,000+
 - We are awaiting cost estimates from vendors instead of stating a budget.

17. We noted your "mega-menu" examples, are there other sites that you like the look and feel of?
 - The sites listed in Section 5 of the RFP document most closely resemble what we are looking for in a menu system.

18. Are there any other 3rd party systems or databases that we need to integrate with? Ex., Are the Tri-County Council Members lists being pulled from a database?
 - There are no 3rd party systems to integrate with.

19. Can you elaborate on this: "Provide a "personalized" user experience based on frequented links and preferred areas of interest".
 - This is what we are going for. Because our website will cover a region of 3 counties (Wicomico, Worcester and Somerset) our goal is to help our users get to what they are most interested in. For example, if I have used the site before and I (as the user) have frequented links and information pertaining to Somerset County. When I revisit the site, much of the initial information I see should reflect what I am most interested in.

We would like this site to be able to anticipate what the user may be interested in based on their site history.

20. Can you elaborate on what you mean by, "easy automation and back-up"?
 - Once LESMD live, we would like the selected vendor to establish automatic site backups.

21. How long after the initial roll-out do you plan on implementing eCommerce?
 - We anticipate implementing the ecommerce part of the site within 6-12 months of the initial launch.

22. Do you have any specific requirements to help us recommend the best payment gateway?
- We are only planning to offer a very small inventory of items. Initially no more than 20, perhaps further down the road, maybe 30. Therefore, when recommending a payment gateway, please note that ecommerce is not the main function of this site. As long as the payment gateway can handle small transactions, that is really all we need.
23. What are your security requirements for the storage of PII?
- TCC follows the state of Maryland's guidelines, which are found <http://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/IdentityTheft/businessGL.aspx>.
24. Where will we be migrating the ~300 articles from?
- There will be no migration. Articles will be provided to the selected vendor via email in a word document format.
25. Along with providing us the content, will a person or content manager from your team be entering the content into the WordPress site or would you like our team to do that for the content required for launch?
- The selected vendor would be responsible for entering content prior to launch.
26. Are the Admin, Editor and Contributor roles the only user-types you foresee needing?
- Yes
27. Is the LESMD looking for back-end website and functionality development or front-end design and back-end development?
- We are looking for front-end and back end development.
28. The new platform should not rely heavily on plugins for functionality, rather the back and front-end code should be clean and easy to decipher, Is LESMD looking for a code-based website development or a content management based website development?
- We are looking for a content management based website. It is understood that plugins are a necessary part of a WordPress site. However, we want to avoid the over use of unnecessary plugins.
29. Section 11. plugins/modules states to include prices for modules as a line item in the cost, Is the LESMD looking for an open-source or a propriety content management system or a code-based website development?
- This project will be built using WordPress, which is an Open Source platform.
30. Are the mockups provided the only front-end templates our team should be prepared to develop in order to meet functionality and technical requirements? If not, has a style guide or mockup containing all generic elements and states (i.e., button hover effects, button click effects) been prepared?
- A brand and style guide will be provided to the selected vendor detailing generic web elements for the selected vendor to develop.

31. Have the designs themselves undergone a WCAG accessibility / ADA compliance evaluation? If not, should our team anticipate performing this evaluation and noting any accessibility deficiencies in the designs for LESMD to correct?
- The selected vendor should be prepared to evaluate the mock-ups and make adjustments and suggestions to the design as needed to ensure LESMD is ADA compliant.
32. Have you identified a target budget range for the development portion of this project? If not, would you be willing to disclose the range of effort that went into the discovery and design segments of work?
- We are awaiting cost estimates from vendors instead of stating a budget.
33. To what extent do you anticipate having social media integration? The mockups do not suggest any sort of "feed" of content, so we are assuming some sort of ability to share articles to the named platforms is requested. We want to emphasize, however, that this sort of functionality is generally provided by a free third-party module or plugin, which would fall under the criteria of section 11 of the RFP.
- Yes, the ability to share articles is part of what we need. If you would refer back to the 2-D mock ups, within the footer, you will notice a set of social media icons. We would like ability to display and link to our associated social media channels as well.
34. Please elaborate on your e-commerce requirements. You note that the selected vendor is expected to develop an e-commerce section using WooCommerce, but that it is not part of the initial roll-out. Is it your expectation that the vendor will develop this to be ready for TCC to publish at its discretion?
- Yes, that is correct. We want the ability to "turn on" the ecommerce section of the site when we are ready.
35. Please also provide a mockup of an individual product page, shopping cart, and checkout functionality. To our understanding, WooCommerce does not come with front-end features by default.
- This will be provided to the selected vendor. Please keep in mind that the designs for the product page, shopping cart and checkout sections will be simple, and match the existing mockup aesthetic.
36. Is there an established budget for the project?
- We are awaiting cost estimates from vendors instead of stating a budget.
37. We'd like to verify that the deliverables in section 14 are due after a vendor has been chosen.
- All deliverables in section 14 are due after the vendor has been selected.
38. Can vendors from outside of the State of Maryland compete?
- Yes, the vendor may be located outside of Maryland. The vendor must be available during operating hours from 8:00am-4:30pm EST.

39. Is there any separate branding work required for this project, or is it the intent of LESMD to use existing brand standards, colors, logos, etc.? Are these brand marks and colors available in vector format? Do you have a brand standards guide?
- LESMD has existing brand standards that will be provided to the selected vendor at the beginning of the project. All brand marks will be available in vector format.
40. In what format will the 2-D mock ups be delivered to the selected vendor?
- Currently, the files are exported as jpegs. The mock ups were created in Adobe XD. The native .xd file can be provided if the selected vendor prefers.
41. Will the content for the blogs be produced by staff or is that a task to be included in the proposal?
- Blog content and articles will be produced by TCC staff.
42. Does any content exist for the website architecture listed in section 10.2?
- Existing content will be provided to the selected vendor.
43. In addition to the contact form, are there any other forms which need to be created?
- No
44. Have you conducted any qualitative or quantitative market/ audience research activities in the past two years including any online/email/phone surveys, or focus groups?
- No, we have not.
45. Can you please submit a budget range for this project? Even something in rough and ranged terms will help us scope this work to align with your expectations.
- We are awaiting cost estimates from vendors instead of stating a budget.
46. Does this budget include the hours required for the 6-month warranty.
- Please see response above. No budget is provided.
47. Should we budget for usability testing?
- Yes
48. Do you have a library of images or video we could use or should we budget for stock imagery or an on location photo shoot?
- Yes. We will provide a library of images and video to the selected vendor. In the event that stock imagery is needed, TCC will purchase and provide the images.
49. Are you using or anticipating using an email marketing system? If so which one?
- We use Constant Contact in house. We do not plan to connect it to the LESMD platform.
50. Depending on where we are with COVID 19 in the coming months are you open to strictly remote meetings/approvals/presentations?

- Given the unprecedented circumstances, yes we are.

51. How do you measure success (KPIs) for the website?

- The success of this website will be dependent on our user traffic and the amount of time spent on each page. We plan to utilize Google Analytics or Facebook Pixels to measure and evaluate the performance of this new site once it has launched.

52. How has performance been trending over the past 12/18 months?

- This is a brand new site, so there was no performance data to measure.

53. What are your specific goals for growth going forward? (over what time period, from what type of offerings/services)

- Because this website brand new our goals moving forward include:
 - i. Establishing LEDMD as a reputable regional brand, responsible for promoting economic development efforts within our three counties.
 - ii. Establish an e-commerce presence, and offer LEDMD branded items to our users. This roll out will be within 6-12 months of the site launch.

54. What is your brand known for today? Have you conducted any brand health tracking or monitoring studies? (awareness, consideration, perception)?

- This is a new venture. The LESMD brand is in the process of being established. We have not conducted any brand health or monitoring studies.

55. Who are your core competitors?

- Presently, there is no one on the Lower Eastern Shore with a site like LESMD.

56. How do you feel your website compares to what your competitors offer today?

- LESMD and its content will be designed to market and promote individual lower shore entities on a regional scale. For example, we plan to highlight government activities, economic sectors, industries, and projects for the entire region on Wicomico, Worcester and Somerset Counties. Presently, there is not another web platform that serves the region in this way.

57. Have you documented the segment-specific requirements (needs) of each audience(s) for the website?

- No, we have not.

58. Will there be a tourism component to the website objectives?

- There will be a small tourism component. Within our calendar section, we plan to highlight large regional events. We also plan to discuss and highlight a small town, unincorporated region or city quarterly.

59. How, if at all, do you think this target market will evolve in the future (given your growth goals)?

- Local governments (county and municipal), nonprofits, elected and appointed officials, trade and industry groups, economic development professionals and local residents on the lower shore will make up the bulk of our target market. We recognize that leadership, age groups and other factors will shift over the years. At which point are marketing efforts likely to shift to accommodate this trend. We will make the appropriate plans to address the marketing aspect when it is appropriate.

When it comes to the website itself, we would like something that is flexible in architecture allowing for growth and the addition of new features when needed. This is to prevent LESMD from becoming an architecturally stale website, that does not accommodate what our target audiences want or need.

60. Can any existing customer research/analytics be shared?

- This is a new venture. The LESMD brand is in the process of being established. We have not conducted customer research studies.

61. The RFP asks for “User experience, mobile device and browser testing” as well as “ADA compliance” and “Responsive page design”. Has another firm completed the design (both user experience and user interface, or visual design) for the website?

- No, the 2D mock ups were created in house. No user experience, mobile device or browser testing has been completed. This would be the responsibility of the selected vendor.

62. If yes, will the previous design firm be available for creative QA during development or will you require design support in the proposal?

- Please see question #61.

63. If not, should we assume the mockups shared are directional but should not be taken as the future end state? If somewhere in the middle, please elaborate.

- The mock-ups were designed to give potential vendors an idea of what we envisioned as the final site. Having said that, the Tri-County Council is open to recommendations on improving site design and functionality.

64. Regarding Search Engine Optimization, the RFP assumes that client will provide content. Will SEO and content recommendations be desired as part of the proposal?

- Yes

65. Does your organization have an existing brand style guide or brand book?

- LESMD has existing brand standards that will be provided to the selected vendor at the beginning of the project.

66. Will we be referencing content or design styles from an existing website?

- No, just the 2D mock-ups.

67. The RFP mentions Wordpress as your intended CMS. Do you have a current instance?
- This project will be built using WordPress, which is an industry standard Open Source platform and hosted on SiteGround where TCC has an established account. Please refer to section 8 of the RFP document for the preferred Content Management System.
68. Are you considering any other CMS platforms?
- This project will be built using WordPress, which is an industry standard Open Source platform and hosted on SiteGround where TCC has an established account. Please refer to section 8 of the RFP document for the preferred Content Management System.
69. What is the projected timing for WooCommerce launch? Do you prefer to see pricing for that effort included in this proposal or e-commerce capabilities only?
- We anticipate implementing the ecommerce part of the site within 6-12 months of the initial launch. Please included pricing for ecommerce efforts in the proposal.
70. Regarding the admin permissions, where will users register and create accounts for the website? Will this happen on the site or via another portal or channel?
- Users will not have the opportunity to register and create accounts. Rather, TCC site administrators will create accounts for specific users.
71. Do you plan to procure any paid personalization tool for user segmentation and preferences?
- No
72. When you look toward the future and the transformation that needs to occur, what are your top priorities? What does the business do well on the digital side today and what does it do poorly?
- Because this website brand new, there is no historical data to evaluate. Therefore, we cannot answer your second question. Our goals moving forward include:
 - i. Establishing LEDMD as a reputable regional brand, responsible for promoting economic development efforts within our three counties.
 - ii. Establish an e-commerce presence, and offer LEDMD branded items to our users.
73. How do you see your product/service mix evolving from what you offer today? Do you envision rolling out new services? If so, what do those look like?
- The LESMD platform will begin with a small, manageable amount of content. Within 6-12 months, we anticipate implementing the ecommerce section of the site to offer branded bumper stickers, hats and t-shirts.
74. Will you be able to share your Services contract/MSA with us? We would like to understand Terms & Conditions for the work, any liabilities clauses etc. that you have for the engagement.
- We typically use the vendor's contract provided it meets all of the codicils and regulations in the RFP. If the vendor's contract is not acceptable, we use our contract template that is included under the Main Documents section of the RFP on our website

or on the eMaryland Marketplace website. Our contract template may be modified to fit the specific needs of this procurement.

75. Is there a pricing template or format preferred?

- No preferred pricing template. We just asked that the pricing structure be as clear as possible.

76. Is there a preference for fixed price or time and materials?

- We require a fixed price contract.

77. Approximately how many in-person meetings do you estimate will be needed? This is completely doable, we would just need to plan for it. We suggest that the kick off meeting would be in-person at the beginning of the project. Are there any other meetings that you foresee?

- We anticipate only a few in person meetings, if any at all given our current circumstances. In the event that we are able to meet in person, we would expect only two in person meeting. One at the start of the project and one before the conclusion of the project. We expect a virtual monthly meeting regarding project status updates. Correspondence will be primarily by email, phone or video conferences.

78. Would you be open to our design team making slight design updates to the provided website/2-D mockups? The reason we ask is:

a. There are a couple small tweaks we can make to enhance performance

b. There is not a mobile mockup, which we would suggest completing

- We are open to slight design updates and recommendations on improving site design and functionality.
- We would like the selected vendor to complete a mobile design mockup.

79. You mention providing the content for the website, would you like assistance with copyediting?

- We do not need assistance with copyediting.

80. Do you foresee providing us with all pictures/graphics and video content? Or do you envision us creating some of those assets? If so, can you provide a list of graphics and videos we will need to create or provide, as well as some detail around them?

- We will provide a library of images and video to the selected vendor. In the event that stock imagery is needed, TCC will purchase and provide the images.

81. Please describe in further detail as to what you expect in regard to a "'personalized' user experience based on frequented links. How do you foresee that working?

- This is what we are going for. Because our website will cover a region of three counties (Wicomico, Worcester and Somerset) our goal is to help our users get to what they are most interested in. For example, if I have used the site before and I (as the user) have

frequented links and information pertaining to Somerset County. When I revisit the site, much of the initial information I see should reflect what I am most interested in.

We would like this site to be able to anticipate what the user may be interested in based on their site history.

82. You mention "social media integration." Please clarify what you are specifically looking for in this regard. Do you want, for instance, that your Tweets show up on the site itself?

- Social media integration includes the ability to share articles and blog posts. In addition, if you refer back to the 2-D mock ups, within the footer, you will notice a set of social media icons. We would like ability to display and link to our associated social media channels as well.

83. Do you have a vendor already selected to provide you with the ecommerce items?

- No. Although not required, we are open to any suggestions the selected vendor may have.

84. You mention needing to load "15 pages which roughly equates to 62 articles." Would it make sense instead for each article to have its own unique page?

- We appreciate that suggestion. We envision collaborating with the selected vendor on many aspects of the site. If the selected vendor suggests something to streamline the workflow, that can be discussed.